

G.O Thrones 501

Chapter 506: The Frightened Children

“Ah!”

Rhaena was startled and instinctively rolled over to avoid the threat.

“Run!” Maekar shouted, his watery blue eyes wide with fear. His childish voice carried a sense of urgency, but it was too late. He tried to tug on his foster-sister and crawl away as fast as he could.

Rhaena was horrified by the ferocity in the assassin's eyes. She dove into a nearby pile of cargo with the agility of a cat.

“Don’t let her get away!” the assassin commanded, gripping his dagger tightly as he pushed through the crowd in pursuit.

A dozen assassins were on the hunt, chasing the small girl around the ship. Many sailors on board, who knew Rhaena, grabbed hammers and shovels to help.

Pfft! Pfft! But they were no match for the assassins, who slit their throats with swift, merciless efficiency.

For a brief moment, Rhaena found herself out of immediate danger. Panicking, she fled toward the forward half of the deck. Though small and thin, she moved quickly.

“Get her!”

“No mission is allowed to fail!” The lead assassin let go of his butcher’s knife and attacked indiscriminately, leaving a bloody path in his wake.

Within a few steps, Rhaena was cornered. She tripped over a gaping hole in the deck, letting out a yelp of pain.

“Do it!”

The two assassins exchanged a glance, and one lunged forward with his dagger.

“No!” Rhaena cried out, raising her hand in a desperate attempt to block the attack. But her slender arm was no match for the blade.

The dagger gleamed coldly in the sunlight, the tip resembling a bee's stinger. Rhaena’s eyes widened as she watched it descend.

The sea breeze continued to blow, the salty scent filling the air. The harbor seemed to grow louder, yet the moment felt frozen, every sound muted.

“Go to hell,” the assassin snarled, his dry, cracked lips forming the words.

Rhaena closed her eyes in despair, unable to comprehend what was happening.

In the nick of time, a figure fell from the sky.

"Scumbag, get outta here!"

Addam leapt from the cabin, swinging his hammer defiantly.

Poof!

The sneak attack struck the assassin before he could react, hitting him squarely in the temple. His brain burst, and he fell straight to the ground.

Addam landed smoothly and rolled to his feet, quickly observing the fallen body. His eyes momentarily wavered, then regained their resolve. He was killing to save a life, not violating the law.

"Damn, you little bastard."

Seeing his companion's gruesome death, the other assassin charged forward in a rage.

Addam's body tensed as he raised his hammer high and took two hasty steps back, his boot catching the hem of Rhaena's skirt. "My lady, get out of here! I informed the Kingsguard."

The assassin lunged, and their weapons clashed. Addam's mind raced, but his body moved instinctively, fighting back with surprising skill.

In a brief moment of clarity, he realized he was actually quite talented at fighting.

"Thanks, I'm leaving!" Rhaena said, her eyes wide with confusion. She quickly realized she had been saved and scrambled to her feet, running as fast as she could. Her foster mother had always told her she hadn't inherited her parents' natural talents, unlike her sister Baela, who was a natural warrior.

Saying, "If you're in danger, just run."

"Run! Run!" Addam shouted at the top of his lungs, standing alone to block the swarming assassins. Despite his not-so-strong body, he stood tall and imposing.

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On the other side of the ship, Maekar, with teary eyes, crawled to a corner and curled up into a small ball. Bodies of sailors lay everywhere, and their curses and screams echoed in his ears.

Peeking out, Maekar saw an assassin stab a sailor who was blocking his path. Fearful, he shrank back.

"There's another one," the assassin sneered, spotting Maekar. A cruel smile appeared on his lips as he approached.

When he reached Maekar, the assassin suddenly noticed the boy's platinum-blond hair. He glanced at the boy's luxurious clothes and his expression changed. "Are you a prince?" he asked.

Maekar's eyes lit up, and he said decisively, "Yes, my father is the king."

"That's a problem," the assassin muttered, hesitating. He was unsure whether to drop his dagger. This was the heir to the throne, and the king was a young Dragonlord known for his cruelty.

Realizing the assassin's fear, Maekar quickly formulated a plan. He knew the target seemed to be Rhaena. An idea flashed in his mind.

He swiftly took off his backpack and pulled out a precious dragon egg, whispering, "You can go. This is worth more than me."

The assassin stood there, greed filling his eyes as he looked down at the oval, dark red dragon egg. A dragon egg was worth a fortune, much more than the price of an assassination.

Without thinking, the assassin reached out, picked up the egg, and kissed it with delight. "Haha, worthy of the royal family. So generous."

Maekar, indignant, pushed the backpack toward him. "You'd better go now, before your friends find you."

"Get lost. I don't need this," the assassin growled, kicking the backpack away. He stuffed the egg into his bosom and threatened, "You be quiet! I don't want to mess with that scary king."

"Mmm-hmm," Maekar nodded like a chicken pecking at grain.

Satisfied, the assassin changed into a set of craftsman's clothes and mingled with the crowd to escape.

Maekar, who had been on edge, let out a long sigh of relief once the assassin had completely disappeared. He picked up the kicked and flattened backpack, patting it down with a sad expression.

"It's all broken," he muttered, pouting.

Holding the backpack over his head with both hands, he felt a strange mix of relief and annoyance, thinking.

'I'm glad Father is so terrifying.'

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The Cabin's Front Door.

Rhaena stumbled and ran all the way back to the cabin's front door. The shipwrights, alerted by the commotion, were ready with their hammers. As soon as they saw the Lord's granddaughter, they quickly took her under their protection.

"My lady, don't be afraid. We've already alerted the patrol soldiers," the old shipwright said, his face serious as he hammered on a makeshift wooden shield.

Rhaena let out a sigh of relief, tears almost welling up in her eyes. She still didn't understand what was happening and why she was the target of an assassination attempt.

Just as she was about to speak, a flurry of footsteps echoed in the cabin. Cole, dressed in white and carrying a long sword, rushed out, anxiously asking, "Where are the assassins?"

Rhaena swallowed hard and pointed behind her. "Assassins... there are so many."

Cole's anxiety grew. "Where is Prince Maekar?"

"We got separated," Rhaena replied, suddenly remembering Maekar's last words to her to run. She burst into tears. "Maekar was behind us, hidden in a boat."

Her emotions made her words jumbled, and she gestured wildly, only able to give a rough description.

Just then, Baela, Baelon, and Aemon ran out of the cabin.

"Sister!" Baela shouted, worry etched on her face as she hugged a crying Rhaena.

Baelon, looking completely dazed, shouted, "Where's my brother?"

"I'll go get someone," Aemon said, his face stern as he began to run down the ship.

"Come back, don't make things worse," Baelon commanded, dragging his identical twin brother back. He then looked up at Cole with authority. "Ser, bring my brother back safely."

Cole looked at the chaos on the ship and then at the princes and princesses around him. He hesitated, torn between saving the young prince and protecting the king's eldest son and his siblings.

"Cole!" Baelon said sharply, imitating his father's majesty. "Maekar is my younger brother. Who are you to judge our worth?"

Cole was struck by Baelon's words, his face quickly becoming solemn. He raised his hand in salute. "Prince, you are right."

The mission of the Kingsguard is to protect the royal family. He was not qualified to judge their worth. It was his duty to do his best to save lives.

Cole turned to leave but not before instructing the shipwrights, "Protect the Princes as they disembark. Immediately!"

The shipwrights dared not refuse and did as they were told.

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The Side of the Ship

Addam darted around, dodging the relentless pursuit of the assassins. These were battle-hardened veterans, each with extraordinary skills. To them, Addam was merely a lowly minion, so they sent only two assassins after him.

When Cole reached the side of the ship, he ran straight into a group of no less than ten assassins.

"A Kingsguard. Kill him," one of the assassins whispered, and they attacked en masse.

Cole's eyelids twitched furiously. Surrounded, he had no choice but to wield his greatsword defensively.

Pop!

A dagger pierced his thigh, soaking his pants in blood. "Get out of the way, you scum!" Cole screamed in pain, decapitating the attacker with a swift slash of his sword.

Plop!

Suddenly, there was a splash. Cole glanced over and saw a figure with silver hair and dark skin jump into the sea, disappearing in an instant. It was the boatman who had delayed the assassins.

Cole froze, his heart sinking. His last ally had also fled.

"Split up and go after the target," the leader of the assassins shouted, directing two men to bypass Cole.

"Stop!" Cole tried to block their path but was forced back by the others.

“Bastard!” he roared, shock and anger fueling his fury as he swung his sword at his enemies.

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The Harbor

The boatmen nervously escorted the Prince and Princess off the ship, guiding them through the vendor area.

Baelon, struggling and reluctant, exclaimed, “Why are you running? There are only a dozen of them. Whoever saves my brother, I’ll give him more money than he can spend.”

Rhaena, her tears flowing, pleaded, “Please help. I’ll ask my grandfather to give you a big raise.”

“Alas,” the old boatman sighed deeply and reluctantly refused. “Sorry, we’re not warriors. This is all we can do.”

Even if the reward was high, you had to be alive to collect it. They all had families and couldn’t risk their lives.

At that moment, three assassins ran down the ship, chasing after them.

“Ah!” The street vendors screamed in horror, and many people fell over as they saw the flashing knives. The assassins moved swiftly through the crowd like cheetahs, their eyes fixed on their target. To them, the princes and princesses were not people, but shining gold coins.

“Run!” Baelon was the first to react, pushing the boatmen. “Take them and run separately, hide in the houses.”

He gritted his teeth and struggled out of the old boatman’s arms, first hiding under the orange vendor’s cart. The boatmen scattered, surrounding Aemon and Rhaena as they ran.

The assassins were closing in when Baelon, with a hardened expression, bent down and pushed the cart into the middle of the road. Despite his young age, he was strong and managed to crash the cart into the assassins, slowing them down.

The leader of the assassins saw him and, thinking quickly, decided, “You go after them, I’ll take care of this one.” The mission had failed, but kidnapping a prince was still a big payday, and it might save his life.

“Dream on!” Baelon spat and turned to run along the drainage ditch. He remembered it led to an alley, and he knew his uncles were at the brothel. He hoped they could help him kill these bastards.

The assassin leader snarled and chased after him, causing chaos as they ran through the crowded streets. Baelon, agile and determined, slipped through the legs of passersby and into a dirty, smelly alley.

There were soldiers patrolling the harbor, and if he could hold off the assassin long enough, he would be saved. But the assassin leader was relentless, pushing past pedestrians and following the familiar terrain, calmly searching for his target.

Finally, the assassin found Baelon at the end of a maze of alleys. Baelon, realizing he had been caught so quickly, felt his heart pounding as he darted from alley to alley. He ended up in a narrow alley with a strong smell of urine, and found himself at a dead end. Behind him, he heard the assassin's quick footsteps.

Baelon froze, unsure where to run. Suddenly, a small hand covered his mouth and pulled him away with great force.

“Woof!”

Bang!

A door in the wall closed as if it had never been opened.

Chapter 507: Addam and Nettles

Inside the Dark Room

Baelon was caught off guard as he was dragged into a dark, dank room. The space was complex, with small compartments like a beehive. The walls had no windows, and the interior was damp and dark, with moldy moss growing in the cracks of the masonry.

“Whoo-hoo~”

Baelon struggled, thinking he was being abducted.

"Shh, don't make a sound!" a voice whispered urgently. A furry head rested on his shoulder, and the strange accent made it clear the speaker was a little girl.

Baelon immediately quieted down and reached out to pull away the dirty hand covering his mouth. A casual glance revealed olive skin and rough knuckles rubbing against his cheeks. The owner of the small hand did not resist.

“Who are you?” Baelon asked, quickly drawing back and turning to face his rescuer. He saw a young girl with a head of fluffy black hair.

"My name is Nettles," she replied. Her dark skin and almond-shaped eyes gave her an exotic look, and she looked at the silver-haired boy as if he were a precious treasure.

Baelon felt uncomfortable under her scrutiny and took a step back. She was considerably older than him and had a fierce appearance. Her face was freckled, with a crooked nose that bore a clear scar as if it had been broken by a fist. Despite this, her wide-set eyes radiated confidence.

"You..." Baelon began, hesitating to explain that someone was trying to kill him.

Before he could continue, Nettles flashed a broad smile, grabbed him by the collar, and dragged him further into the house. "Hey, Aranda, I caught a dragon rider too!" she called proudly.

With a creak, she kicked open an old door, and a beam of light pierced Baelon's eyes. The bed frame creaked under the strain of the sudden illumination.

A middle-aged woman with similarly fluffy curls and a fit body was in the room, busy with something. Nettles's sudden entrance startled her, and she quickly dismounted from what she was doing.

"Sorry!" Nettles immediately turned around and looked away in embarrassment. Baelon was stunned and confused, having never seen anything like this before.

The curly-haired woman cursed and hastily adjusted her skirt. Seeing the situation turning awkward, Nettles kicked Baelon in the butt and said angrily, "Come with me."

Still dazed, Baelon followed her, trying to make sense of his bizarre rescue.

"Ahem..."

Suddenly, a violent coughing sound came from the bed.

"Wait."

Baelon was taken aback by the sound, feeling it was somehow familiar.

Nettles kicked him again, shouting angrily, "How dare you look!"

The boot connected with his buttocks, but it didn't hurt at all. Baelon was rooted to the spot, his voice filled with surprise. "Uncle, are you here too?"

Without the curly-haired woman blocking his view, he saw the young man lying on the bed. He had wet silver hair and a youthful, pale face.

At that moment, the young man coughed repeatedly, wiping the water from his lips. The curly-haired woman knelt beside the bed, apologizing profusely.

Baelon shook off Nettles, who was a head taller than him, and walked excitedly to the broken bed. "Uncle, it really is you!"

Aegon barely stopped coughing, his face turning red. Seeing his good nephew, he quickly grabbed the sheet to cover his lower body, his face wrinkled into a ball. "Baelon, why are you here?"

"That's what I want to ask you," Baelon replied, looking between his uncle and the curly-haired woman with strange eyes. 'Aren't you supposed to be with your younger brother?'

Today's experience was more thrilling than the past six years combined.

"Uh... this..." Aegon stammered, quickly changing the subject. "Say! Why are you here, or I'll tell Rhaenyra."

He couldn't admit that he had been chased out of a high-class brothel by Aemond and had picked up the first prostitute he saw. That was not something to boast about to his nephew.

Glancing at the poor, curly-haired woman, he warned her, "Don't tell anyone about what happened today!"

She nodded fervently, promising repeatedly that she wouldn't tell anyone.

Aegon sighed in relief, pulled out three gold dragons from his pocket, thought for a moment, and put one back. He then tossed two to the woman. "This is 100 times your normal price. Don't tell anyone!"

"Don't worry. A dragon wouldn't be found in a mud pit," the curly-haired beauty replied, delightedly picking up the gold dragons.

Aegon glanced at her with pity and began dressing. If only money could solve everything... This encounter had cost him dearly, enough to spend a month in the flea bottom brothel! He gritted his teeth, thinking how unlucky he was.

Fortunately, the money was well spent. If Rhaegar found out he was in a place like this with his nephew, he would cut off his third leg. While dressing, Aegon eyed the simple Baelon, contemplating how to keep him from telling anyone.

He was about to weave a little lie.

Baelon grabbed his uncle by the arm and said urgently, "Uncle, come with me. There are assassins outside."

"Wait a minute. Let's talk this over," Aegon replied, stunned and thinking he had misheard.

Baelon, jumping up and down in panic, pointed to the alley. "I can't wait. I'm going to be assassinated!"

"Who would dare to assassinate you?" Aegon asked, clearly confused and incredulous. The idea that anyone would target the heir to the throne, Rhaegar's eldest son, seemed absurd to him.

Baelon, anxious and angry, dragged his uncle towards the door. "Don't ask questions. Maekar has gone missing!"

Seeing a relative for the first time in a long while felt like grasping at a lifeline. Despite his young age, Baelon was incredibly strong and literally pulled Aegon out of bed.

Aegon, shocked and aware of his own physical decline, looked at his limp legs and pinched his fat little belly. Finding an excuse to refuse, he said, "Don't be impulsive. Uncle will take you to find the patrol."

Six years ago, he might have been ready to fight, but his skills had long since deteriorated.

Baelon took his refusal as cowardice and angrily shook his hand off. "If you won't go, I'll go myself," he declared, heading towards the front door.

Nettles, with shifty eyes, watched the argument between uncle and nephew, then followed the silver-haired boy. Before leaving, she slyly picked up Aegon's belt, took a ruby from it, and hid it in her sleeve.

Aegon, helpless and resigned, hurriedly put on his clothes and followed his nephew out the door.

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The Alley

The assassin leader sneaked into the alley, sniffing the stench in the air, his expression unchanged. Soon, he found a broken wooden door covered in urine and feces. Grinning, he inserted his dagger into the door and tried to pry it open.

Meanwhile, at the entrance to the alley, a man in a black robe walked along the narrow street, observing the poor vendors on either side. Turning a corner, he spotted the assassin leader attempting to pry open the door. He took a good look at him from a distance: calluses on his hands, a scar over one eye, lean and energetic, but lacking signs of systematic training.

The black-robed man smiled and noticed a skinny old man selling stone carvings at his feet. Bending down, he picked up an uncarved stone and walked into the alley with light steps. The old man's eyes were cloudy, and he dared not speak, instead burying his head.

Click! Click! The assassin leader squatted down, repeatedly prodding the door latch with his dagger. After two unsuccessful attempts, he angrily tried to kick the door open, failing to notice the approaching danger.

The black-robed man walked silently until he stood behind his target, weighing the stone in his hand. "Hi," he said politely, tilting his head to the side.

The assassin leader turned around in horror, but before he could react, the black-robed man struck. Bang! The skull burst, sending a piece of bone flying into the pit of filth.

"With this level of skill, you dare to be an assassin," the black-robed man muttered, shaking his head regretfully. With a gentle push, the corpse fell backward. He bent down, dragged the body into the corner, and a strand of silver hair fell over his shoulder.

Rhaegar lifted his hood and stared at the broken door. Aegon was inside, as was Baelon. The two of them, one big and one small, were far too careless. "I will have to clean up this mess later," he sighed in frustration and took the dragon compass from his necklace. The compass was simple and elegant, its needle spinning back and forth.

He had just seen the patrols leave and had already found Baela and Aemon. He hadn't seen Rhaena yet, but he needed to find his youngest son, Maekar, first.

Hum. The needle pointed towards the harbor, and the spider web with the blood pattern froze, depicting a dragon egg. Rhaegar put on his hood and set off, the compass in hand.

As he passed the skinny old man selling stone carvings, he casually threw back the bloody stone and two silver coins, each with substantial weight. Without saying a word, he continued walking.

"Thank you, my Lord!" The old man got up and knelt down again, biting the silver coins in surprise to test their purity.

After a while, two small figures approached the alley, peeking in curiously.

"Dead?" Nettles stretched her neck, spotting the corpse.

Baelon pinched his nose and pushed aside the dirty bag on his head, saying calmly, "I heard the sound of the patrol."

Although curious about how the assassin had died, seeking help was more pressing.

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In a dark alley on an unknown street, Rhaena fled in a panic, pursued by two assassins. Unlike her sister Baela and Aemon, she had attracted their attention.

The assassins, their faces covered, shoved aside vendors as they chased her.

“Ah!” Rhaena slipped and screamed, eyes shut tight.

Boom! Instead of the expected fall, she crashed into a hard chest. Looking up, she saw a serious face wrapped in a silver helmet.

Arryk looked solemn and drew his sword with a swish. “Prince Daeron, take Lady Rhaena and go.”

“Daeron!?” Rhaena was overjoyed to see Daeron beside the Kingsguard.

“Follow me,” Daeron said, helping his fiancée to her feet. A group of patrols escorted them to safety.

With no worries, Arryk charged forward, sword in hand. The assassins, knowing their fate was sealed, tried to flee.

“Stop!” Arryk was quick, like a leaping shadow cat, and soon caught up with the assassins trying to blend into the crowd. He stabbed one, piercing his belly. As he pulled out his sword, the intestines spilled out.

The other assassin, terrified, ran for his life, but Arryk was faster. He swung his sword and cut him in half at the waist.

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At the Sea Snake Harbor

At the harbor, sailors were in a panic, screaming and running in all directions. Rhaegar, dressed in black, boarded the ship and entered the cabin, which was wide open.

Humming. The compass hummed slightly, its needle glowing. Rhaegar spun around, pointing at a dimly lit storage room.

Bang! A wooden door was kicked open, revealing a dimly lit figure.

He stood there, tense and drenched in sweat. In his arms, Maekar was curled up, shivering. Addam, holding a hammer, stared at the door, a dry basket slung over his shoulder.

Rhaegar took off his hood and looked at the pair in surprise.

“Father!” Maekar suddenly looked up and cried out in a pained voice.

Seeing the handsome, silver-haired man with purple eyes, Addam's pupils shrank, and he stammered, “L-Lord.”

Chapter 508: Prelude to War

"Addam, you have done well."

"I owe you a debt of gratitude for your bravery."

...

High Tide, Hall of the Nine

Sea Snake, leaning on his cane, placed his hand on the shoulder of the young man with silver hair and dark skin, and solemnly thanked him. "Addam, you did well."

Addam looked directly at the Lord and humbly replied, "My Lord, this is what I should do."

"No, you did what no one else dared to do," Sea Snake said, a hint of pride in his eyes as he regarded the young man before him. Addam, dressed simply, was so nervous he couldn't maintain eye contact. Despite his humble appearance, Sea Snake saw great potential in him.

He was worthy of being his... He quickly pushed the thought out of his mind and looked around cautiously.

In the Hall, Rhaegar, still in his black robe, was speaking with Rhaenys, and the captain of the Kingsguard, Erryk.

"The children are fine, but Rhaena is in shock," Rhaenys said, her voice tinged with sadness. "Both sisters are scared, and Baela has been crying." She sighed deeply, feeling the weight of the incident. Even strong-willed Baela had shed tears, and as their grandmother, Rhaenys felt particularly heartbroken.

"Tell Baelon to keep them company. Children can empathize more," Rhaegar suggested, his expression remaining unchanged. His gaze shifted to Erryk. "Ser, do you have anything to say?"

Erryk gritted his teeth and spoke with regret. "Your Grace, I am deeply sorry for what has happened." He had hoped that Driftmark, almost a second home for the royal family, would be free from such brazen acts of treason.

Looking directly at Rhaegar, Erryk straightened his chest and tried to make amends. "Ser Cole killed seven assassins and was seriously injured, but fortunately he was not fatally wounded."

Rhaegar's cold gaze showed no sign of being impressed. Erryk quickly continued, "To protect the Princes, I have assigned Arryk, Lorent, and Steffon to them. This will never happen again."

Despite Cole's bravery, his heroics couldn't erase the mistakes made through carelessness. If not for Prince Maekar's quick thinking, the consequences could have been disastrous. Prince Baelon and Lady Rhaena had narrowly escaped death.

Rhaegar felt a mix of annoyance and relief, his voice icy. "I want to see the heads of all the assassins before nightfall."

"I promise!" Erryk replied firmly. "The assassins invoked the Harpy, but they weren't the Sons of the Harpy from Slaver's Bay. They were a group of illegal mercenaries." He emphasized that the Sons of the Harpy wore golden masks, a symbol of their faith, and these assassins were clearly different.

Tapping, tapping...

Two figures entered the hall. Arryk walked quickly, holding a dark red dragon egg, with Baelon close behind, holding the dragon compass.

Arryk handed over the dragon egg. "Your Grace, the assassins who stole the Prince's dragon egg have been captured. They were on a cargo ship bound for Braavos."

"Father, the compass," Baelon said, slightly out of breath, offering it as if it were a treasure.

Rhaegar took the items and instructed Arryk, "Seal off Driftmark completely. Cannibal will patrol the Gullet. Any suspicious ships that venture out to sea will be sunk."

"Yes!" Arryk pounded his chest, bowed, and hurriedly left.

Rhaegar's eyes flashed as he rubbed the egg. "Men from Slaver's Bay, ships from Braavos," he mused. There was a definite connection, even if indirect.

Sea Snake, having just bid farewell to Addam, approached Rhaegar with a serious expression. "Your Grace—"

"Quiet, Lord Corlys," Rhaegar interrupted, waving a hand. He looked into Corlys's eyes, disappointment clear. "My child was almost assassinated in Velaryon's territory. You don't need to say anything now."

"Your Grace..." Sea Snake began, stunned and wanting to explain.

But chaos erupted in the castle. Maids and servants screamed, and Ser Lorent led guards in a thorough search of High Tide Castle. Before Corlys could speak, five disheveled Velaryon members, tortured and shackled, were brought into the hall. Their hands and feet were injured, fingernails pulled out, knuckles broken, and their mouths stuffed with rags soaked in herbs.

Rhaegar's eyes narrowed, his grip on the dragon egg tightening behind his back.

Lorent stepped forward. "Your Grace, these five traitors were in contact with the remnants of the Triarchy in Slaver's Bay and intended to assassinate Lady Rhaena. They have committed treason."

"Traitors?" Sea Snake's face changed as he recalled the patrol ambush in the Disputed Lands.

Rhaegar sneered. "Lord Corlys, House Velaryon truly has many hidden dragons."

Sea Snake, his head spinning, stumbled in disbelief. "My two nephews died in the war with the Triarchy. They..."

He stopped talking, realizing that his relatives had betrayed their blood relatives and conspired with the enemy.

Rhaegar declared, "The Kingdom's occupation of the Disputed Lands has long been a target for many."

He walked past the Sea Snake, who was overcome with self-doubt, and beckoned for a longsword. Waving it, he found it lifeless. His gaze shifted to a bloody hammer hanging on a stone pillar.

"My children are frightened because of this. Then no one should live," he said, his voice as cold as winter in the North. He reached out and took the three-foot-long hammer, ready to strike.

At that moment, a beautiful figure hurried into the hall. Rhaegar paused, glancing at her.

Helaena, dressed in a blue silk dress, carried a limp Maekar in her arms. "What's wrong with him?" Rhaegar asked, hiding the hammer behind his back.

Helaena lowered her head, holding Maekar tightly. "Did you catch it?" she asked in a strange voice. Maekar looked back at her with teary eyes, his head resting on her delicate neck. The scene warmed Rhaegar slightly.

Rhaenyra was looking after her two foster daughters and was more concerned about the twin brothers.

As the youngest and an introvert, Maekar was closer to Helaena. Upon returning to High Tide, Maekar was taken away by Helaena, who had heard the news.

Rhaegar held the dark red dragon egg aloft and smiled. "Don't be afraid. The bad guys paid the price, and the dragon egg was not lost."

Helaena's spirit lifted, and she patted her nephew's bottom. "Look, your dragon egg."

Maekar stopped crying and stared at the dragon egg he had given away, his big blue eyes filled with inexplicable sadness. Rhaegar, thinking his son was blaming himself, gently comforted him. "No one blames you. In your father's eyes, you are more precious than any dragon egg."

The little one was smart enough to know he had just saved his life. When he was a child, Rhaegar had wandered around Crackclaw Point and haggled with the wildlings. This child was just like him.

"No," Maekar shook his head violently, his eyes sad. "I gave the dragon egg away, and it won't recognize me anymore."

In other words, he sensed that he would never be able to break the shell of this dragon egg. This was the price he had to pay. Rhaegar, full of doubts, sensed his son was telling the truth.

Helaena stroked Maekar's back, placing her forehead against his, whispering, "Shh, don't cry. You'll find another way."

Maekar wiped away his tears, took one last look at the dark red dragon egg, and then huddled against his aunt's neck. "I'm sorry, but I can't have it anymore."

The two of them had unexpectedly hit it off.

Rhaegar sighed and handed the egg to Baelon. "Take your brother downstairs. Father has some business to attend to."

"Leave it to me." Baelon patted his chest and took his brother from Helaena's arms. Maekar tried to walk on his own but was easily carried away by his three-year-old brother.

"The egg will be kept by the Dragonkeepers." As he watched his sons leave, Rhaegar tossed the egg to Erryk and picked up the hammer, advancing menacingly on Malentine Velaryon.

"Woo-woo..." The five Velaryons tried to speak, whimpering in fear. Malentine stared with wide eyes, shaking his head frantically and kneeling to beg for mercy.

Boom!

The heavy hammer struck, and flesh and blood splattered everywhere. Rhaegar's expression remained cold as he crushed the thick brain matter, then moved on to the next victim.

“Uhh...”

The next man bowed heavily, screaming like a madman, and tried to bite Sea Snake's trousers.

“Your Grace, should we...”

Boom!

Half of the brain flew out, landing at Sea Snake's feet. He swallowed his suggestion to publicly execute the prisoners, his pupils twitching and his teeth grinding as he backed away.

Rhaegar turned to him, bloodstains on his porcelain-white skin resembling bright plum blossoms. Sea Snake shuddered, realizing the true meaning of hell.

“Lord Corlys, did I ask you to speak?” Rhaegar asked, feigning confusion as he shook off the sticky substance from his hammer.

Sea Snake was at a loss for words, unable to answer.

At that critical moment, Rhaenys stepped in front of her husband, speaking helplessly. “Your Grace, Corlys only thinks that this will undermine your majesty. Besides, they have already admitted their mistake. Perhaps they can be given a chance to atone for their sins by wearing black robes.”

Corlys's eyes were filled with mixed emotions, and his wife's words reflected his own thoughts. He couldn't help but feel a pang of guilt.

“Ohhh...”

The remaining three Velaryons nodded repeatedly, their eyes full of a desperate desire to live. They would rather live on the Wall than die here.

Rhaegar paused, looking back and forth between Sea Snake and Rhaenys. After a long silence, he sighed lightly, seeming to be persuaded.

Rhaenys's brow relaxed, and she continued, “The assassins are from Slaver's Bay. We should send a message to Daemon to prepare.”

Boom!

Before her words had fully settled, a head flew into the air like a rotten watermelon bursting. Rhaegar kept his hammer raised, looking almost apologetic. “Sorry, I hit the neck.”

Plop!

The headless corpse fell backward, its spine swaying grotesquely. Rhaegar turned around and casually threw the hammer to the stunned Ser Lorent, coldly ordering, “Take the other two and execute them according to the tradition of the Boltons in the North.”

“Your Grace?” Lorent hesitated, wanting to persuade him. The traditional methods of House Bolton had long been banned and were widely opposed by both nobility and commoners.

“Do it!” Rhaegar ordered coldly, not wanting to hear any more excuses. His children had almost been killed. The perpetrators needed to feel the pain they had caused.

Lorent dared not argue further and quickly ordered the three bodies and the two half-crazed Velaryons to be dragged away. The hall returned to a semblance of peace.

Rhaegar turned his gaze to the Sea Snake, who stood with his eyes closed, deep in thought. “They don’t understand their wrongdoing; they’re just afraid of punishment.”

The Sea Snake remained silent, but Rhaenys spoke up, “You’re right, Your Grace.”

Rhaegar dismissed any potential dissent and intensified the punishment. “Their families will be imprisoned and sent to Winterfell to serve as servants. Lord Cregan will receive them personally.”

It was well known that two years prior, Cregan Stark, who had rebelled against his uncle the Regent, had reclaimed control of Winterfell. He had even traveled to King’s Landing to renew his ties of friendship with Rhaegar.

As Rhaegar finished speaking, the Sea Snake's eyes snapped open, expressing strong protest. The five nephews were guilty, and their deaths were acceptable. But punishing their families and sending them to the North was not only a disgrace to House Velaryon but also a significant weakening of its bloodline.

Rhaegar's voice was indifferent. “Do you have a problem with that?”

The Sea Snake felt a lump in his throat, his voice becoming hoarse. “There is a mastermind behind this. Before the storm, a wise sailor does not abandon all available resources.”

Slaver’s Bay, Volantis, Braavos... All the forces on the continent of Essos were potential enemies of the Iron Throne.

Rhaegar agreed, saying, “Yes, but I am not a sailor. I am Rhaegar Targaryen the First, The King on the Dragon’s Back.”

With that, he walked past the Sea Snake. “Slaver’s Bay is too far away. Pick a suspect and strike.”

“This is just killing some rats to warn the others!” he declared, ignoring the Sea Snake’s stunned expression, and strode out of the hall. Helaena, who had watched the whole exchange, followed him leisurely.

The first thing Rhaegar did after leaving the hall was find Aemond, who was hiding in his room, brooding over his loss of face at the brothel.

Bang! Rhaegar kicked open the door and shouted at Aemond.

...

A moment later, three dragons soared into the sky from Driftmark, flying over The Gullet and heading towards Braavos.

The Sea Snake was right. War was coming. Agreements would be broken, or they would be forged anew in a baptism of blood and fire.

Chapter 509: The Dragonlord’s Oppression

Spicetown, the Harbor.

A royal ship with three red dragon banners was moored at the harbor, and Erryk, captain of the Kingsguard, was overseeing the unloading of cargo. Nearby, Rhaenys walked with the Sea Snake, their gazes fixed on a single figure.

“Roar!”

Syrax flapped its wings, its topaz-colored scales shining brightly in the sunlight, flamboyant and beautiful. Rhaenyra stood beside the dragon, holding her infant daughter and cooing softly to her.

Half an hour earlier, Rhaegar had departed with Helaena and Aemon on their dragons. Unwilling to remain in Driftmark, Rhaenyra decided to set off for King’s Landing.

“Rhaenyra, be careful on the road,” Rhaenys said, her voice heavy with guilt. The assassination attempt on her nephews and niece had taken place on her land, and she couldn’t escape the blame.

Rhaenyra smiled reassuringly. “When this is all over, I will bring Rhaena back.” She didn’t trust Driftmark’s safety and had her children pack their belongings.

Sea Snake, pale and leaning on his crutches, limped over. “The Iron Throne is surrounded by wolves. Your Grace has a plan, but as a queen you need to give more advice.”

Rhaenyra didn’t hesitate. “The assassin who harmed my son was on a Braavosi ship.”

Sea Snake’s words were just short of accusing Rhaegar of acting impulsively. However, Braavos was also one of the culprits. If the three dragons could deter them, she would support Rhaegar’s actions.

Sea Snake sighed and stepped back, speechless. Rhaenys, understanding her husband’s worries, felt helpless. Volantis and Slaver’s Bay were allied and eyeing the Disputed Lands. Provoking Braavos could be dangerous.

“Your Grace, we are ready to depart,” Erryk reported after the cargo was loaded.

“Thank you,” Rhaenyra replied, grabbing the soft ladder extending from Syrax’s saddle with her bare hands.

Suddenly, Daeron stepped out of the crowd, full of apologies. “I still have to serve as a wine steward. The watch on Driftmark is over, so I’ll return to King’s Landing to console my nephews.”

Rhaenyra looked around before asking, “Have you found Aegon yet?”

“The patrol soldiers are still searching,” Daeron admitted, blushing with embarrassment. After ensuring Baelon’s safety, Aegon had slipped away alone. Though still on Driftmark, he had lost contact.

He wasn’t in any danger; the assassins had been killed. This wasn’t the first time Aegon had disappeared.

Rhaenyra was speechless but said nothing. She immediately climbed onto Syrax’s back.

As the dragon took to the sky and the ship sailed out of the harbor, the Sea Snake and the others watched them depart.

On the vast sea, the royal ship, like a red crystal, sailed back alone.

Roar!

Syrax led the flight, soaring above Blackwater Bay to escort the ship safely. On the deck, many guards looked up in awe. Flanking the bright yellow dragon were two smaller ones, one emerald green and the other pale green. They resembled leaves, highlighting Syrax's nobility and grace.

...

Inside the Cabin.

Bang! Bang!

Arrows struck the targets set up in the corridor, embedding themselves in the straw man's chest. Baela, holding a Myrish triple crossbow, clenched her lower lip, directing her frustration at the straw target.

"Great, right in the bull's-eye," Baelon commented.

"Don't praise me, it's too close," Baela replied, dismissing the compliment.

Baelon stood farther away, on his toes, peering through the window at the three dragons in the sky. His ears twitched as he sensed Baela wiping her sweat. Yearning in his eyes, he joked, "You should really ride a dragon with Aemon. He's the only one having any fun. I wonder how he'll feel when he gets back."

Baela put down the crossbow, her mood sour. "Forget it. No matter how good you are at riding a dragon, you're still running for your life when you get off."

She thought about being chased through the city that morning and wished she could disappear into the ground. Baelon, looking away, commented, "That's different. You should ride a dragon if you have one. My father says there's no rush to hone your martial arts."

"Tsk, you think everyone is like you, with the Kingsguard protecting you?" Baela retorted indignantly, glancing at Ser Arryk standing at the end of the corridor.

Baelon, embarrassed, said, "That's not what I said."

Compared to the three brothers, the sisters did not have Kingsguard specifically assigned to protect them. Their foster mother, Rhaenyra, had made efforts to increase the number of female companions and escorts who usually accompanied them.

Baela, feeling awkward, said, "Is not that, I just feel a little..."

She trailed off, unable to express her grievances. She walked to a cabin door and leaned against it. Through the wooden door, faint sobs were audible. It was her sister Rhaena's room.

Baelon walked silently to her side and held her hand in silent comfort. He could feel her struggle to suppress her emotions.

Baela looked out the window and suddenly said, "I hate my father."

“Why?” Baelon asked, looking up.

Baela turned her head away, hiding her tears. “He betrayed my mother and left Rhaena and me to fend for ourselves.”

Rhaena's succession was being questioned, and their parents were absent. Even when they were in danger and needed their parents' love the most, they only received a little from their foster mother, Rhaenyra.

She and Rhaena had their own parents, and thinking about the root of everything, she deeply resented her father in Tyrosh.

“This...” Baelon felt sympathy and couldn't agree with his elders' actions.

The two held hands and leaned against the hard door. The low sobs behind the door provided a poignant background music.

...

Late at Night in Braavos.

A roar of anger echoed throughout Braavos, accompanied by the flickering of beautiful green fire. The Titan of Braavos burned, its bronze armor and rope grass skirts consumed by flames, leaving only charred remains. Fires raged in the ports, devouring goods in the warehouses and merchant ships at anchor. The garrison rushed out, only to be engulfed by Dragonfire in an instant. For a time, the entire Free City was reduced to a living hell of wailing and flames.

...

The Sealord's Palace

Under the night sky, three dragons pierced through the clouds, destroying the heavily fortified army and landing safely in the fountain square. Cannibal, black as coal with dead, lifeless green eyes, stood like a mountain. Its breath, tinged with green fire, inadvertently evaporated the fountain.

Dreamfyre and Sheepstealer, one on each side of the black dragon, lay on their sides, their vertical pupils surveying the surroundings. Whenever the wind stirred, sulfurous Dragonfire appeared in an instant.

Inside the Sealord's Great Hall, Sealord Sparda shouted at the maidservants to quickly put on his armor, his heterochromatic eyes fixed on the outside world. “Damn it! What’s the Iron Throne doing, sending three dragons to attack for no reason!?” Several advisers trembled, cursing the sudden appearance of the enemy.

“Shut up!” Sparda was hysterical under the immense pressure of the dragons.

Outside the window, the three dragons were motionless, like stone sculptures carved by the hand of death. But their enormous, bronze-colored eyes seemed to extinguish the free life of everything in heaven and earth.

Through the greenish Dragonfire of the surrounding buildings, Sparda could see some detailed images.

The black dragon raised its back and slowly crawled to the ground. A silver-haired figure sat firmly on the dragon's back, even when the dragon swayed. Suddenly, the figure stood up tall, slid down the dragon's back, and held the reins. At the same time, two other dragon riders followed closely behind on the backs of the other dragons.

Sparda clung to the glass window, staring intently without blinking, afraid of missing a single detail. Under the dim night sky, the silver-haired figure walked towards the Sealord's Palace, looking up at it. In an instant, Sparda saw the pair of cold purple eyes and broke into a cold sweat. He knew that the other party had discovered him.

"Gulp..." Sparda swallowed hard and asked, "Has the rescue letter been sent? When will the Iron Bank send someone?"

One of the advisers stepped forward, trembling. "The messenger has already been sent, but I don't know if he can safely pass through the streets burned by Dragonfire, and..."

He stopped mid-sentence. The Iron Bank was rich and powerful, but it couldn't immediately send out an army, let alone a suicide squad that could contend with three dragons.

"Bastard!!" Sparda, shocked and furious, pounded the balcony with all his might. Then he turned, making a swift decision. "Follow me and meet the king of the Iron Throne."

If you can't beat them, you have to join them. He had recently received secret reports from Volantis and Pentos and noticed the frequent trade with Slaver's Bay. The Sealord had already guessed the Iron Throne's intentions.

Outside the Palace

The gates of the Sealord's Palace were wide open. Sparda, his face ashen, led a group of advisers with cramped legs out of the palace. At the bottom of the palace steps, three silver-haired figures had already arrived, arms crossed, looking up at their host.

"Roar..." Dreamfyre stretched its neck, its wings supporting it as it crawled forward, its light blue dragon head level with the Sealord's palace. After several years of growth, this older female dragon had made great strides in size. Over 100 meters long from head to tail, it had become the third adult dragon after the Cannibal and Vhagar, climbing to the top tier in combat power.

Swish! Rhaegar unsheathed his sword, Truefyre, from his waist. The ruby glowed, and he aimed it straight at the new Sealord, who stood on the edge of several frightened advisers. The sound of the sword was like a signal. Helaena followed suit, unsheathing her sword, the Long Summer, its slender blade glistening with cold light.

Dreamfyre's pupils constricted, and the dragon's head slowly lowered, its mouth converging into a ball of light blue Dragonfire.

At that moment, Rhaegar tilted his head and said softly, "Sealord, would you like to talk?"

Sparda's heart skipped a beat. His legs froze in place, and he hesitated to agree.

Shifting perspectives, although Rhaegar and his party were clearly below the high platform, their presence and the looming threat of the dragons made them seem higher, dominating the Sealord and his retinue.

...

King's Landing, Red Keep

Rhaenyra had just finished washing and was slipping into a soft silk nightgown. She took a sip of strong wine, preparing for bed. Raising children was tiring enough, but dealing with assassination attempts made her feel like she had failed in her duties.

Knock, knock!

There was a knock on the door. Rhaenyra called out, "Elinda, come in."

Creak

The door opened, and a thin maid entered. More accurately, she was a lady-in-waiting. Elinda carefully closed the door behind her, holding a letter. "Your Grace, the Black Swan of Lys."

"Give it to me."

Rhaenyra took the envelope, and a black and white rose medallion came into view. Johanna Swann, the famous courtesan of Lys, known as the "Black Swan," had become a key ally after the war in the Narrow Sea. Rhaegar's army had installed her as the rightful Grand Master of Lys, and she had pledged loyalty to Rhaenyra.

Rhaenyra opened the letter and read it carefully. Her frown deepened, and soon she was furious. "That bastard Daemon has betrayed Laena after all."

Bang!

The letter hit the table, and Elinda caught a glimpse of the contents.

"White Worm is pregnant, and the Prince Tyrosh is planning a wedding."

Elinda was shocked and lowered her head in shame. Laena was one of the councilors in Lys, partly due to her position and partly because Lady Mysaria, known as "White Worm," had almost broken with Daemon. Now that Mysaria was pregnant, her marriage to the royal family seemed unstoppable.

"Damn bastard!" Rhaenyra's anger flared and she let out a rare swear word. In recent years, she and Laena had become close friends, sharing similar fates. Seeing her friend's rights violated made her feel indignant.

Elinda's body trembled as she placed the letter on the candle flame to burn it. Rhaenyra sighed and raised her hand to her forehead. "Forget it, I'll deal with it later."

Elinda whispered, "I'll do it. Sara is taking care of the little princess."

Hearing this, Rhaenyra patted her friend's shoulder, feeling a bit relieved. The maids who served the Princess were also divided into different classes. The highest status was naturally the ladies-in-waiting, girls from noble families who had received a good education.

Elinda came from House Massey in the Crownlands and was one of the ladies-in-waiting who had grown up with Rhaenyra. In private, the master and servant had a very good relationship.

Rhaenyra sat down at the table and suddenly asked, "How are Rhaena and Maekar?"

"The children were scared."

Elinda replied, "Lady Rhaena is still crying in her room, and the little Prince is already asleep."

"Haha, Maekar can eat and sleep through anything," Rhaenyra smiled helplessly.

Chapter 510: A Valyrian Steel Weapon

Red Keep, the Temple.

A dimly lit, enclosed space, where the candlelight created a serene atmosphere. A small figure sat at the edge of the altar, surrounded by white candles. In front of him was the hideous skull of the Black Dread, Balerion.

"Prince, if you don't go back to bed, you'll be too tired to get up in the morning," Ser Steffon said, standing to the side, patiently trying to persuade him.

"Shh~" Maekar's face scrunched up, his eyebrows furrowing.

Steffon could do nothing but nod in understanding. He had been assigned to the little prince and had to comply with the boy's wishes.

"Thank you," Maekar whispered sincerely, his big, watery eyes full of gratitude. Without waiting for Steffon to respond, the little one crept up to the altar.

The altar was surrounded by a dense array of butter candles, most of which were burning brightly. Maekar crossed the flames with ease, as if they weren't there. Soon, he was at the jaw of Balerion's skull.

Maekar looked up at the sky, his little face full of confusion, and reached out to touch the still-warm dragon skull. He had lost his dragon egg, a loss with deeper meaning, one that could never be recovered.

"Father said Balerion would protect us," Maekar murmured, clasping his hands in prayer. "Balerion, you helped my grandfather and father. Please help me tonight."

The huge dragon skull and the small silver-haired boy created a poignant contrast in the dim candlelight. Steffon remained silent, watching the little prince who was not even as thick as a dragon's tooth. Maekar knelt, his body a small ball, resembling a devout believer in the gods.

"Bye, Balerion," Maekar finally whispered, taking a deep breath and getting up to say goodbye. He turned to see Steffon staring at him and tilted his head. "Ser, help me."

He walked to the edge of the altar and opened his arms. Steffon snapped back to reality, thinking for a moment that he was seeing His Grace as a child, and hurried forward. "Prince, are you going to rest now?"

Maekar, obediently carried down to the ground, pursed his lips. "No, Balerion told me."

“Told you what?” Steffon asked, confused.

Maekar looked up, his eyes wide. “Balerion told me that tonight is not a good night for sleeping.”

He walked to the chapel door, holding the frame with one hand, his expression as mysterious as that of a little, superstitious wizard. “It told me that a dragon will be tamed soon!”

...

Braavos.

“Roar!”

Three dragons rose into the air, leaping over the city engulfed in flames, and flew towards the Narrow Sea. As they passed a small floating island connected by a bridge, a gray building below stood out. Rhaegar seemed to sense it. He looked down at it in the moonlight and whispered, “The House of Black and White.”

The headquarters of the Faceless Men, the most feared building in all of Braavos.

Rhaegar gave a light slap of his hand and issued an order.

“Roar!”

Cannibal swooped down, diving into the floating island area and circling the House of Black and White. Rhaegar watched the gray building with its closed doors, making no comment.

Moments earlier, he had had a friendly chat with Sealord Sparda. In the name of the Iron Throne, he had borrowed another 500,000 gold dragons, with a maximum repayment period of 60 years. The two sides had also signed a treaty. The Iron Throne would declare war, and Braavos was not allowed to intervene in any way, or the debtor would be entitled to cancel the debt. It was an alternative means of preventing Braavos from leading an attack on the Iron Throne.

The three dragons were powerful enough to burn everyone in the Sealord’s palace to death, but the group behind the Iron Bank still lived. They had enough money to buy off the world’s mercenaries. The money was scattered globally, buried in secret vaults. Even if Braavos was burned to the ground, it would not be found.

Rhaegar's display of force served as a timely warning to Braavos. They could either swallow their pride or go to war in haste. As it turned out, merchants were a bunch of rats who sought profit and avoided danger.

The Iron Throne successfully borrowed the money, and 500,000 gold dragons were delivered to the Myr Bank three days later.

“Roar!”

Cannibal roared, spraying Dragonfire over the outer moat of the gray building before carrying Rhaegar back into the sky. Rhaegar pulled himself together and said, “Let's go, partner.”

During his negotiations with the Sealord, Rhaegar had made very specific and realistic demands. From that night onward, any harm that befell his children—be it assassination, disease, or even a fall from a horse—would result in Rhaegar riding his dragon to Braavos and burning the Sealord's palace to the ground. It was an unreasonable and blunt threat, but Rhaegar didn't care.

As Saera Targaryen once said, Westeros was too cold for the hot-blooded Targaryens. Sitting on the Iron Throne, Rhaegar told the world that the Targaryens were the Dragonlords, and wherever a true dragon went, it would bring blood and fire.

Rhaegar had Syrio the Water Dancer and Sara the Faceless, clear any signs of the threat posed by the Faceless Men.

Hiring a Faceless Man to assassinate him would cost the Iron Throne a year's income. Value was a measure of power. He dared not gamble on whether someone would hire a Faceless Man to assassinate him, especially if the target was someone close to him. Even he himself was not 100% safe—a cup of poison could take him to Balerion.

To avoid such accidents, it was better to be thorough. Mutual checks and balances were the only way to ensure long-lasting peace. This House of Black and White should stay in Braavos. Westeros did not welcome it.

...

The Night Deepens.

Three dragons flew out of Braavos, landing in a remote village.

“Quack, quack...”

A black raven flew in, landing on a crooked-neck tree far from the dragons. Rhaegar recognized the raven as a pet that Syrio had raised in the Myrish palace. Of the three Free Cities, Myr was closest to the Crownlands. Syrio, having withdrawn from Volantis, stayed in Myr as the chief swordsman and Master of Whisperers.

Rhaegar slid off the dragon’s back, and the raven flew over, carrying a letter box. He opened it and took out the letter, reading it carefully. It contained just two short sentences:

"Lady Mysaria is pregnant, and Prince Daemon is privately hosting a celebration at a brothel."

"Volantis has assembled a fleet to try to block ships from the Disputed Lands reaching the Summer Sea."

This letter provided more detailed information than the one Rhaenyra had received. After reading it, Rhaegar looked up at the sky and closed his eyes.

Pop!

A flame flickered from his fingertips, burning the small piece of paper.

Helaena and Aemond climbed down from their dragons. Helaena, with an innocent look, hugged the slender, long necked Dreamfyre. Aemond strode forward, his one eye gleaming, and asked, “What’s the latest news?”

Rhaegar sighed, a slight curl on his lips. “There are fools who don’t know when to die and are willing to sacrifice themselves to help me accomplish my great cause.”

Daemon’s marriage to multiple wives had been planned by his father. It had broken the alliance between his good uncle and the Sea Snake. Additionally, the Tiger Party in Volantis was unwilling to accept only a portion of Lys’s port taxes, repeatedly provoking trouble. It was a perfect storm.

The Velaryon fleet would crush the ambitious Volantis. In the process, they could enter the Smoking Sea to find the wandering wild young dragon. With the war, troops would be sent everywhere, including the Vale. The opposition factions in the Vale would be mobilized and sent to the battlefield.

He had watched as Daemon and Laena fought, and behind the scenes, he fanned the flames of conflict, endorsing his uncle's marriage to Mysaria, the White Worm. With proper financing, he could not only resolve his eldest daughter's inheritance but also tear away the last shreds of decency between his uncle and House Velaryon.

It was a win-win situation! Of course, these events required a heroic sacrifice to stir the stagnant waters of the present. Volantis was the perfect victim—strong enough, but not too strong.

Rhaegar let out a long breath and glanced sideways at Aemond, who looked eager. "Go back to Storm's End and discuss the marriage with Cassandra."

Aemond's face changed slightly, showing reluctance.

Rhaegar, knowing his brother well, smiled. "Then, mobilize the Stormlands troops and wait for my order."

At this, Aemond's face brightened, and he responded confidently, "Good. Wait for my news."

War was a wonderful word to him. As the second son, only victory in war could bring him glory and make the family proud.

Rhaegar discarded the burnt paper and called out to Helaena, who had been silent. "Come with me. We're going to Myr to prepare for the loan from Braavos."

By the way, he needs to contact The Eyrie.

Mysaria, the White Worm was a pawn but she really can be as disgusting as a maggot.

Helaena nodded, touched Aemond's head lightly with her toes, and then climbed onto her dragon's back. Soon, the siblings were riding away on their dragons.

Aemond was left alone, his one eye flickering uncertainly as he remembered the touch of his sister's hand.

"Roar?"

Sheepstealer lay on the ground, its tail poking the rider. Aemond waved his hand calmly. "Don't make a fuss. We still have business to attend to."

Sheepstealer shook its head in disdain, snorted heavily, and ignored the rider's high-running emotions.

Aemond hesitated for a moment, then bent down to pick up the only remaining piece of paper. The paper, the size of a fingernail, was blackened at the edges and faintly legible with tiny letters.

"White Worm, Celebration."

Aemond frowned, analyzing the meaning of the two words. Combined with what he had seen on Driftmark and the events of the past few years, It wasn't difficult to guess that the White Worm must be pregnant, indicating a brewing storm within the royal family.

His older brother Rhaegar was his role model: wise, brave, and fearless. Unfortunately, Aemond saw him as a coward who was afraid of his wife.

Rhaenyra had dominated Rhaegar for so many years, and there must have been significant conflict. In Aemond's view, it was not wrong for a man to marry more than once, especially if he was the king of a country. If possible, he wanted to marry multiple times and find a lover who was his ideal match.

Rhaena's plot against Lady Jeyne of The Eyrie made him view her as a jealous woman.

This was one of the main reasons for his hostility toward Rhaenyra. Aemond believed his eldest brother should be blemish-free.

Aemond tossed away the scraps of paper and smiled happily. "My sister should get married soon. My uncle would help with this."

He then mounted the back of Sheepstealer. As the large mud-colored dragon spread its wings, he suddenly remembered the scene when the three siblings confronted the Sealord of Braavos. Rhaegar wielded Truefyre, and Helaena drew Long Summer. Two Valyrian steel swords—a formidable display.

Aemond shook his head and muttered, "Where can I find a Valyrian steel weapon?"

He touched the one-eyed dagger at his waist, a gift from his brother, but not suitable for the battlefield. The family had many Valyrian steel weapons: Father's Blackfyre, Rhaenyra's The Realm's Delight, Aunt Rhaenys' Dark Sister. Oh, yes, his brother also had two Valyrian steel weapons: a long spear, "Dawn," that he didn't use often, and a lost sword, Dragon's Claw.

As he thought about it, Aemond's eyes lit up. "House Velaryon had a Valyrian scimitar, and Celtigar, who was also from Valyria, seemed to have one weapon as well."

The thought grew uncontrollably.

"Roar..."

Sheepstealer soared into the sky, its brown wings covering the bright moon, disappearing into the night in an instant.